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Learning Model Comparative Article

There are several different constructivist-learning models that are used across the world. Each of the different learning models has the students in some degree in charge of their own education. The two models that I focused on were the anchored instruction and the cognitive flexibility theory. These two theories have similarities, differences, and different features that make them constructivist-learning models.

The first theory is the anchored instruction method. The anchored instruction method is learning and teaching method that should be designed around an “anchor” that is based on a contextualized case study or problem situation. This method also allows the learner to explore using active manipulations, questioning, and other involvements to the situation. The principles of this theory are to include a realistic task or event, problem is anchored or focused, and the students should take ownership of their own learning. Another principle is that the situations that the students are trying solve should be easily transferable to other situations. Another component that is important for the anchored instruction is the use of technology. Since the students are exploring to find their answer to the problem themselves, they will use a variety of technologies to find the solution. They will use the Internet and the several different websites that have information, virtual tours, simulations, and pictures that can be used to help the students to decide on a solution. After the students have decided on the solution, they will use technology to present their ideas and thoughts. After every student has decided on a solution then they will present their ideas to the class. This method is most successful in the elementary grades in the subject areas of math, science, and social studies. An example of this method in action would be a study on volcanoes. The class would be split into groups that would have each group research a different component of the volcano. One group would be to explore the active volcano, another group would be in charge of researching the details about what to expect from an emergency evacuation team, and the rest of the students would try to figure out how, when, and/or how the inhabitants should be evacuated. After the different groups have done their research and found all the details that they needed, the class would then come together to develop a strategy of solving the problems related to the evacuation. This is an example of an anchored instruction lesson because the students are presented with the problem. After they are given the problem the students are in charge of doing their research and coming up with their own solution. After the solution is decided upon, the class will work together to present a final solution to the volcano evacuation.

Another constructivist-learning method is the cognitive flexibility theory. The cognitive flexibility theory is to help develop the learner’s ability to understand various situations. It is important being a constructivist-learning method that the learner develops his or her own representations of information in order to learn. This method focuses on case analysis. The learner is to progress from several levels of material by starting and/or moving to any point in the thought process. The cognitive flexibility theory is a case based theory; there are four different types of cases. The first case is defined as cases, which is the core of this theory and is a broad case. It is not usually only one scenario but many varied cases. The next type of case is themes. Themes are ideas that are expressed by subject matter experts as possible background knowledge for understanding the complex scenarios that are to be studied by the learner. A third type of cases is mini-cases. These cases are breaking down the broad case into parts. Mini-cases often include text selections or scenario themes from complete cases. The last types of case are perspectives. Perspectives are the conceptual and semantic elements that are within a mini-case. This theory uses interactive technology. The students will use the technology to find the solutions to their cases. The steps to creating a lesson that uses the cognitive flexibility theory is to first have the students divided into small groups. Next it would be important for each student to come and discuss the problem with the teacher. After each student has discussed the problem they will then brainstorm their ideas not only to generate the questions that need to be answered to solve the problem but this will also get there minds thinking about their schema of the problem. The teacher would then tell the students what the conditions and circumstances of the problem. In some cases the students will have already come across this in previous cases that they have worked on. It will be important that the students learn to transfer their knowledge from one case to the next. The most common ways to assess this method is through portfolios, projects, and visual essays. An example of a cognitive flexibility lesson has to do with a person trying to learn a second language. For example if the person is trying to learn Italian (a Latin based language) and already knows Spanish (a Latin based language), they will be able to use their schema of Spanish to learn their new language.

These two theories are similar because they both call for the students to do their own research to find the solution to a problem that they have been presented with. The students will both be given a problem and be given the opportunity to discover their own answer to the problem. Another similarity is that both of the theories use technology to be able to find their answers to the questions. The final similarity is that the teacher is a moderator, not a teacher that will stand in front of the classroom and lecturing all day.

Some of the differences between the two theories are that the cognitive flexibility theory has the students work in groups all of the times where as the anchored instruction theory may have the students work in groups or individually. Another difference is that the cognitive flexibility theory is a case based theory.

Each of these learning theories has pros and cons and situations that will help the students to learn on their own. I have discovered that these learning methods are not too difficult to implement and will allow the students to learn more on their own instead of being constantly told what to do. I think that these theories are important to consider when deciding what kind of lessons to teach.

References

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